



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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07 November 2003

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Indonesia: Information on the ethnic or religious minority, Jawa/Kejawen; their location; whether they are targeted by the Muslim community or the general population (2000-2003)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

According to Joglosemar Online, an Indonesian non-profit foundation that preserves and promotes Javanese culture and traditions, Jawa refers to the island of Java where the local belief system known as Kejawen, or Kebatinan, continues to exist (n.d.).

The Overview of World Religions (OWR), an online collaborative project between the Museum of World Religions in Taiwan and the Department of Religion and Social Ethics at St. Martins College, in the United Kingdom, divides Javanese Islam into the syncretist Agami Jawi, or Javanese religion, which incorporates Kejawen/Kebatinan spiritual movements, and the more "puritanical" Agami Islam Santri, or Santri Islam religion, which recognizes sharia law (n.d.).

A substantial portion of Agami Jawi concepts and beliefs reportedly stem from Islam, especially Sufism, or mystical Islam (OWR n.d.). Prior to the arrival of Islam in the fourteenth century, however, Hinduism and Buddhism blended with the indigenous Javanese forms of worship to create Agami Jawi, states the OWR (ibid.). The *Australian Journal of Anthropology* explains that despite the centuries of Islamic influence, followers of Kejawen, or the "Javanist religion," have maintained indigenous and Hindu elements in their faith (1 Dec. 2001).

Please refer to the attached document from the Overview of World Religions for more detailed information on the Javanese religion.

In 1982, there were reportedly over 100,000 people involved in 93 different Kejawen/Kebatinan movements in Central Java (OWR n.d.). Approximately 7,500 of these people were involved in Kejawen/Kebatinan movements in Surakarta (ibid.). According to the OWR, Susila Sudi Darma, Paguyuban Ngasti Tunggal, Paguyuban Sumarah and Sapta Darma comprise the largest Kejawen/Kebatinan movements on Java (ibid.). No information on the current number of Kejawen/Kebatinan movements or people involved in them could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

An opinion piece in the *Jakarta Post* by Abdul Mu'ti, Chairman of the National Board for Muhammadiyah Youth, addresses the apparent division between the "non-orthodox" Islam (AJA 1 Dec. 2001) of Agami Jawi and the "traditionalist" form of Javanese Islam of Agami Islam Santri (23 Oct. 2003). Citing scholars Rahman and Kuntowijoyo, Mu'ti maintains that the gap between the two groups is closing in Indonesia (*Jakarta Post* 23 Oct. 2003). The article partly attributes this convergence to uniform school curricula and the rejection of the implementation of sharia law in the public sphere by several prominent Islamic leaders (ibid.).

Moreover, a 1 November 2002 *Jakarta Post* article, responding to accusations by the international community that the Javanese city of Yogyakarta was "harbouring terrorists," states that despite these claims and the fact that some boarding houses have posted signs to limit entry to people who practice a certain religion, there is also "a healthy religious pluralism" that can be found in the city and its surrounding area. According to the article, followers of Kejawen/Kebatinan, Hinduism, Confucianism, Catholicism and Buddhism can all be found in the region, and many people are open about their religious affiliation (*Jakarta Post* 1 Nov. 2002).

No information on whether Kejawen/Kebatinan members are targeted by the Muslim community or the general population could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Australian Journal of Anthropology (AJA) [Sydney]. 1 December 2001. Vol. 12, No. 3. Thomas Reuter. "Great Expectations: Hindu Revival Movements in Java." (Dialog)

Jakarta Post. 23 October 2003. Abdul Mu'ti. "Boosting Moderate Islam." (Dialog)

_____. 1 November 2002. Intan Darmawati. "Yogya, Safe Haven for Religious Diversity." (Dialog)

Joglosemar Online. n.d. "Kejawen, A Javanese Traditional Spiritual Teaching."
<<http://www.joglosemar.co.id/kejawen/index.html>> [Accessed 3 Nov. 2003]

Overview of World Religions (OWR). n.d. "Javanese Religion." Edited by Elliott Shaw. A collaborative project by the Museum of World Religions, Taiwan, and the Department of Religion and Social Ethics, St. Martins College, Lancaster, UK. <<http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/indon/java.html>> [Accessed 3 Nov. 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

Dialog

IRB Databases

A Research fellow with the International Institute for Asian Studies had no information on whether Kejawen/Kebatinan members are targeted by the Muslim community or the general population.

Internet sites, including:

Amnesty International

Asia Security Monitor

Center for Religious Freedom

Encyclopedia of Religion

Human Rights Watch

Indonesian Human Rights Network

Inside Indonesia

International Institute for Asian Studies

International Religious Freedom Report 2002

Joglosemar Online

Minority Rights Group International

Tapol

Watch Indonesia

World News Connection

Attachment

Overview of World Religions (OWR). n.d. "Javanese Religion." Edited by Elliott Shaw. A collaborative project by the Museum of World Religions, Taiwan, and the Department of Religion and Social Ethics, St. Martins College, Lancaster, UK. <<http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/indon/java.html>> [Accessed 3 Nov. 2003]

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